

Repercussions

by Tony “GaryOak” Genovese

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Prologue

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From here, she could see everything.

Stretched before her far below was the whole of the fertile valley that made up the heart of Equestria, from the dark clot of vegetation at the southern end of the Everfree Forest, to the golden wheat fields surrounding Canterlot. Yet, as she gazed over the land, she knew that what she could not see was more important. Twilight Sparkle was waiting for something, but it did not concern her that she didn't know exactly what it was.

How did I get here? The idea floated around in the back of Twilight's mind, unable to force its way into her consciousness. Still waiting, Twilight shifted her weight, causing a couple of rocks to clatter down a steep slope. Twilight looked at the ground beneath her hooves, seeing nothing but black rock as the ground fell off sharply before her. *I'm on the peak of a mountain, then*, she thought vaguely. She went back to waiting and watching.

The idea came back, stronger this time. *Why in the name of Celestia am I on the peak of –*

An enormous explosion in the valley below shattered her train of thought, and caused her dark purple mane to flap wildly despite the distance. A rainbow, which seemed to originate from the same place, overwhelmed her field of vision. As her sight cleared, a pair of new light sources drew her attention. The first came from a tower in Canterlot Castle.

It intensified in a titanic surge of unrestrained magic. “I... I recognize that light!” gasped Twilight. *But that's impossible... This happened over ten years ago! But... if I'm there in Canterlot... how am I here now?*

The second light source began to grow more distinct in Twilight's peripheral vision: it was coming from Ponyville. As she turned toward it, her jaw dropped and her heart began to race. Ponyville was in flames. A thick purple cloud of noxious fumes rose from the inferno, spreading like a disease. Twilight's eyes widened as the fire spread, faint laughter reaching her ears upon the breeze.

The wind carrying the mysterious laughter began to pick up, blowing the purple smog in

Twilight's direction. An icy chill overwhelmed her heart, and Twilight screamed as the smog continued to gain momentum, drawing closer with each passing second. Lighting her horn, she launched a bolt toward the oncoming smog, praying that her efforts would at least slow it. The spell had no effect; the purple cloud consumed it much like everything else in its path. With no time to escape or prepare another defense, Twilight gritted her teeth and braced for impact.

A split second before the smog made contact with its prey, the howling gale whistled in her ears and formed words. "You've got such potential... the likes of which I have not seen in thousands of years..." The ethereal words caused Twilight to go stock still. "It would be such a waste if we didn't put it to use..." Before she could begin to comprehend the words' meaning, the cloud consumed her, and Twilight blacked out.

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Chapter I Greyhoof

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As she lay flat on her back, Twilight Sparkle's eyes shot open, her coat drenched with cold sweat. "What kind of a nightmare was that?" she panted, taking note of her blankets on the floor. Rubbing her eyes and shaking herself, she clambered out of bed and made her way down the library stairs. So preoccupied was Twilight with the dream that she didn't notice the wide-eyed baby dragon looking up at her from the foot of the stairs.

"Twilight, are you okay?"

Twilight blinked in surprise. Did she want to tell Spike about her dream? She yearned to get it off her chest, but didn't want to frighten her assistant. Normally, she would ignore such a dream. Nightmares came easily to her when she overworked herself; however, no other dreams had ended as ominously as this. The typical nightmares of Twilight Sparkle involved subpar friendship reports, misplaced books and the like.

What did the smog and the burning of Ponyville have to do with that fateful day when the Princess had taken her under her wing? And that voice. The memory of the disembodied voice made her hair stand on end. Twilight started as a small, clawed hand waving in front of her face cut into her thoughts.

"Earth to Twilight! Are you in there?"

"Sorry. Yeah, I'm fine," mumbled Twilight.

Spike cocked an eyebrow. "Uh huh, fine."

"Really, Spike," she said, "I just had a bit of trouble getting to sleep, is all."

Heaving a sigh, Spike stepped aside, giving Twilight a suspicious look as she ambled past him, heading straight for a nearby bookshelf. "Just give it up already," he said, watching her examine each title in turn. "You're overworking yourself and you aren't getting anywhere."

"No, Spike, the answers are here somewhere... I just know it," grumbled Twilight, procuring a hefty red book from a high shelf.

Spike folded his arms. "Oh, come *on*," he said as Twilight began flipping through the tome's pages. "I swear, you've been through every book in here already. You've done nothing but bury

yourself in these stupid things.” He adopted a more concerned tone. “It’s unhealthy, and your friends are starting to worry about you. Just drop it.”

Twilight shook her head vehemently. “I’ve come too far to give up now.”

“But why do you want to know about Princess Celestia’s past so much?”

“We’ve been over this a hundred times,” snapped Twilight. “If I really want to impress the Princess and learn everything there is to learn about magic, I’ve got to learn everything there is to learn about *her*.”

Spike rolled his eyes at Twilight’s rebuttal, a statement he had heard too often in the past few days. He spent the entire morning grumbling to himself while Twilight tore through book after book.

As the afternoon dragged on, Spike’s patience reached its limits. “I need some fresh air,” he muttered, stomping off toward the door. A split second before his hand reached the knob, the door swung open and pinned him firmly against the wall.

“Twilight! Have you heard, have you heard, have you heard?”

Twilight slowly closed her eyes, and suppressed a groan. “No, Pinkie, I’m still trying to study, remember?” When she opened her eyes, the beaming face of Pinkie Pie, which had somehow found its way between her and her book, greeted her. “Gah!” She jumped back and inadvertently sent the book sailing across the room.

Pinkie began bouncing in circles around her. “No, no, no! You don’t understand!” she pressed. “This morning, I saw a pony I’ve never seen before, and you know what that means!”

Twilight froze, knowing all too well what Pinkie was alluding to. “Are you *positive* this is a new pony?”

Pinkie nodded, her mane bouncing everywhere. “I recognize everypony in Ponyville, and I’ve never seen this one before! It looks like he just got here, too. He was wearing this old black cloak, all full of holes and patches and dirt. If that doesn’t say ‘I need Pinkie Pie to throw me a super-extra-special welcoming party’, then I don’t know what does!”

Spike, sensing an opening, quickly jumped in. “A party is exactly what you need, Twi!” He retrieved the book as he spoke. “Take a break for once. Please?”

Twilight sighed. “Fine, but only for a little while.” At this, Spike and Pinkie cheered in tandem. Although she would have preferred to remain in the library, she knew there would be no respite from Pinkie until she accepted Pinkie’s invitation; she’d lived in Ponyville too long to not know

better.

Beaming, Pinkie nodded at Twilight. "See you at Sugarcube Corner!" With that, she was gone, bouncing out the door and out of sight.

"Thanks, Twilight," said Spike, patting her on the back.

Twilight frowned at Spike. "Do you think I had any other choice? You know how Pinkie gets; I wouldn't hear the end of it for weeks."

Spike chuckled. "Good point."

"Hopefully, if I stop in and say hi, she'll get out of my mane about this whole thing," said Twilight. "When did she say it was, again?"

Spike shrugged. "She didn't. Knowing her, it's probably starting right now."

Twilight shook her head. "That makes no sense at all, but because it's Pinkie, it makes perfect sense..."

Jumping for joy, Spike leapt out the door in Pinkie's wake. "Then what are we waiting for? Let's go!" Spike urged as he beckoned Twilight over.

Trudging after Spike, Twilight left the library, grumbling. She shut the door with a little too much force, causing a flowerpot to fall off the nearest windowsill. Startled, Twilight looked at the broken porcelain. *Am I really that annoyed at being forced to go meet up with my friends?* "Maybe you were right," she said.

"Oh?" said Spike. "Go on."

"These studies are starting to remind me of how I was back in Canterlot." Twilight looked apologetically at Spike. "I think I was beginning to forget the most valuable thing Princess Celestia has ever taught me: make some friends." Twilight stopped and hugged him. "I'm sorry, Spike. I'll try to be less obsessive about this from now on."

Returning Twilight's embrace, Spike hummed with contentment. "Thanks, Twi. Let's have some fun. Who knows – maybe tomorrow, when you can come back fresh, you'll find something new."

Twilight grinned at Spike and nodded before resuming the short trek across Ponyville to Sugarcube Corner. Whistling a tune, Twilight did her best to try to push the thoughts of her frustrating studies and the incredibly jarring dream from her mind.

As they turned a corner, a cloaked pony abruptly appeared from the shadows. As vague as

Pinkie's description was, this stallion seemed to fit the bill perfectly. He had a short, tousled mane of green and teal. The cloak – and undoubtedly its wearer – had seen better days.

“Excuse me,” said the grey pony, “I just got finished talking to a rather... hyperactive earth pony. I didn't get everything she said, but I *think* I'm supposed to be at a place called Sugarcube Corner. Do you know where that is?” His hooves shifted uneasily on the road as he spoke.

Smiling at the stranger, Twilight waved. “Hi! I'm Twilight Sparkle and –”

The stallion, who looked only a few years older than Twilight, gasped at this. “Miss Sparkle!” he said, staring at her with his blazing orange eyes. “Forgive me if I was being rude. My name is Greyhoof,” he said with a slight bow.

Twilight cocked an eyebrow. “Twilight's fine. And how do you know my name?”

“You're actually the reason I came to Ponyville,” said Greyhoof, continuing to stare at Twilight. “I have traveled across the length and breadth of Equestria in pursuit of my studies. When I heard rumours that Princess Celestia's own pupil was here in Ponyville, I had to come and see for myself.” Smiling sheepishly, he continued. “I'd like to spend some time studying magic with you, if that's okay. I've seen many things, but I think you could teach me a thing or two.”

She couldn't quite put her hoof on it, but she found Greyhoof's eyes captivating. As he spoke, they seemed to burn with a sort of inner fire. “Wait, magic?” said Twilight, shaking herself. Greyhoof's last statement made Twilight do a double take, blinking in astonishment. That was when she noticed his horn, which seemed to be considerably larger than normal. She usually noticed things like that the moment she laid eyes on a new face. “Yeah, Sugarcube Corner... Actually, there's a party about to happen. A party welcoming you to Ponyville!”

Greyhoof blanched at this. A look of concern crossed Twilight's face. “Is something the matter?”

Greyhoof's eyes shifted from side to side. “I... detest parties.”

Spike walked up to Greyhoof and shook his head. “No no, you don't understand. This is Pinkie Pie we're talking about. Her parties are the best!”

“Regardless, I must decline,” sighed Greyhoof. “They're far too noisy and disorderly for my tastes.” Meeting Twilight's gaze once again, Greyhoof cleared his throat slightly. “I would much rather spend my evening studying than engaging in such a frivolous activity.”

Grinning, Twilight had a revelation. “You know, you remind me a lot of myself a few months ago.” Greyhoof's only answer was a mystified expression. “I'm actually not too fond of parties either, but you need to have some fun once in a while. It'll only be for a few hours. Then you can get back to studies in the morning.” Twilight winked. “I have a feeling we both need it.”

Greyhoof bit his lower lip. "This Pinkie Pie... is she always so... noisy?"

"You'll get used to it," chuckled Twilight. "Let's get going. We'll be late."

Spike hopped on Twilight's back and the two ponies were off. To Spike's disgust, the rest of the journey to Ponyville's bakery consisted of Twilight and Greyhoof avidly discussing the finer points of arcane spells.

"So you mean to tell me that you actually know of old unicorn combat?" said Greyhoof breathlessly, his apprehension about the party momentarily forgotten.

"I've never actually used it," said Twilight modestly. "I do know how to do it, though, in theory."

"So, have you practiced?" said Greyhoof. "I mean, igniting your horn and all that."

"Only occasionally," said Twilight loudly over Spike's pretend snoring. "I've never had anypony to spar with or anything, or a situation when I needed to know it. There's a reason why most unicorns aren't taught it outside of maybe Princess Celestia's Royal Guard."

"Yes, of course." Greyhoof nodded. "It can be quite dangerous if done correctly. Fascinating subject, and quite useful in a pinch."

When they reached Sugarcube Corner, Greyhoof cringed as Twilight opened the door, revealing the bakery's teeming interior. His ears drooped slightly as the loud racket of the merrymaking ponies washed over him. He began to backpedal as his eyes darted between the multicoloured streamers and balloons that festooned the bakery. Greyhoof perked up momentarily when he noticed the wide assortment of delicious-looking pastries, but even his obvious hunger couldn't curb his pessimism for long. "Can we leave now?" he hissed under his breath.

"Leave? But you only just got here, silly!" said Pinkie, oblivious to Greyhoof's yelp of surprise at her materialization. She threw a hoof around his shoulders. "I know it's not up to my usual standards, but I did my best on short notice!"

Greyhoof groaned loudly. "Fine. Pinkie Pie, was it? Can I please speak with you regarding the noise?" He began sidling off to a corner of the room, unable to shake the pink pony clinging to him.

"Okey dokey lokey!" said Pinkie brightly, steering Greyhoof to another room. "We'll be back before ya know it!" And with that, both ponies disappeared into the crowd, a shower of confetti heralding their departure.

Twilight exhaled as she watched them go. "Oh, I hope those two can get along. Or, more

accurately, he can get along with her,” she said to herself. Scanning the bustling room, she quickly spotted a familiar brown cowpony hat amongst the crowd. Nudging through the partying ponies, Twilight made her way to the corner of the room, taking care not to knock over any of the food-laden tables.

Applejack greeted Twilight with a broad smile and a wave. “Howdy, Twi! I was afraid you weren't gonna make it.” She tipped her hat. “So, who's this new pony Pinkie's been goin' on about?”

Afraid I wasn't going to make it? Blood began rushing to Twilight's face. “I guess I've been cooped up in the library a little too much lately, huh?” Trying to ignore Applejack's raised eyebrow, she continued. “I actually bumped into the new pony on the way here. His name is Greyhoof. It turns out he's actually here to study magic with me in Ponyville.”

Applejack gave her friend a wry smile. “Studyin' magic, hmm?”

“Yes, studying,” said Twilight firmly as Spike hopped off her back. “I haven't met another unicorn quite like him; he seems to know a great deal about magic. I think we could learn a lot from each other.” Twilight perked up. “I know! While he's here, he can help me learn about the Princess!”

Spike made a loud show of gagging, then stormed off past a pair of approaching pegasi when he realized nopony was paying attention to him.

Rainbow Dash entered the bakery and walked up next to Twilight. “What's with him?”

“Hi, Rainbow,” said Twilight. “Spike's been a little cooped up lately. I can't blame him, really. He'll be alright; he just needs some time to enjoy himself.” Looking past Rainbow, Twilight spotted Fluttershy cowering behind her friend. “Fluttershy? Are you okay?”

Rainbow facehoofed. “She's been acting like this all day. Something about her animals.”

Her eyes widening with concern, Twilight knelt down beside Fluttershy and spoke as softly as the noise of the party would allow. “What's wrong? Are your animals sick? Can I help?”

Fluttershy shook her head. “They're... they're *gone*,” squeaked the pegasus.

“Gone?” Twilight reared up in surprise, then paused, and frowned. “Are you... absolutely sure about that, Fluttershy? Hasn't this exact thing happened recently? You know, back when Spike was sixty feet tall and destroying the town, didn't you say that all the animals had disappeared?” She raised an eyebrow. “And didn't it turn out that all those missing animals had just been hiding in their homes?”

“Well... yes... but...” stammered Fluttershy.

"And didn't all of those animals show up a day later, like nothing had happened?"

"Yes... but..."

"See, Fluttershy? Nothing to worry about!" said Rainbow, tossing a hoof around Fluttershy.

"Whatever it is, it can't be *that* bad. Look, Fluttershy, if it means that much to you, I'll help you search in a couple of days if they haven't shown up."

"But... but..."

"No buts!"

Fluttershy averted her eyes from Rainbow and squeaked.

Twilight shot Rainbow a disapproving glance. "What?" asked Rainbow, shrugging. "She was worrying herself half to death. This party'll be good for her. And besides, you know what Pinkie's like when you refuse an invitation." She made a circular motion with a hoof next to her head.

The bright voice of Pinkie Pie filled the air. "Thanks for coming, everypony!" she shouted from atop a cake-laden table. "Please give Greyhoof your best Ponyville welcome!" Pinkie's smile wavered as she noticed Greyhoof glowering at her. "Um... a little more quietly, if possible..."

The crowd of ponies stamped their hooves on the ground, showing their approval as Greyhoof beelined toward Twilight. Waving him over, Twilight called out to him: "Greyhoof! I'd like you to meet my other friends." Enthusiastically indicating each of her companions as she spoke. "This is Applejack, Rainbow Dash, Fluttershy, and... wait a minute, where's Rarity?"

"I have no idea! I couldn't find her anywhere," said Pinkie.

"That's not like her," said Twilight.

"Wait a second," said Applejack, "I ran into Sweetie Belle the other day when she was on her way to the main road." She rubbed her chin with a hoof. "She mentioned something about her sister goin' into a right panic about an order for Hoity Toity..." Applejack nodded to herself.

"Yeah, that was it. Sweetie was pretty upset; she said that Rarity shipped her off to her parents' place for a few weeks."

Twilight groaned. "Great. Well, Greyhoof, with any luck, you might get to meet Rarity if you stay here for a month." She offered Greyhoof an awkward smile.

"So, Grey," said Applejack. "Twi's been tellin' me that you're here to study magic?"

Greyhoof's wandering eyes snapped to attention when he heard Applejack's question. "Oh, yes." He nodded. "I've been traveling across the land, searching far and wide for knowledge of the magical arts ever since I was a colt. I... don't know how long I'll be staying here. This noise... I thought I told you to put an end to it, Pinkie." He shot Pinkie a glare.

"It... is quite loud," murmured Fluttershy, whose eyes had been fixated on the door the whole time.

"I *did* ask everypony to be a little quieter," said Pinkie, rolling her eyes at Greyhoof. "But this *is* a party, silly. Parties are noisy. Just smile and have some fun!"

Greyhoof sat on his haunches and huffed. Applejack desperately tried to change the subject. "Hey, Twi, I've got an idea," she said. "Why don't you come over to Sweet Apple Acres tomorrow?" Noticing Twilight's puzzled expression, she continued. "It's just been so long since I've seen ya, Twi. What with bein' cooped up in your library for so long and all. Besides, it's quiet, especially now that most of the entire Apple family is on vacation in Fillydelphia."

"Quiet, you say?" said an intrigued Greyhoof. "Go on."

"Well, it's a farm," said Applejack slowly. "There ain't much more to it than the apple trees and what have you."

Twilight suddenly began smiling widely enough to draw Greyhoof's attention. "I know! I can grab a stack of books and we can study outside!"

"Ugh," groaned Rainbow as she facehoofed. "You eggheads... I swear to Celestia..."

Twilight giggled. "Want to join us, Rainbow? I can bring along a copy of Dar—"

"Not another word!" snapped Rainbow, her cheeks reddening.

"So, Greyhoof," said Pinkie, "what's with the cloak?"

Applejack eyed the frayed hems and loose threads. "Personally, I like it, but I know Rarity'll have a heart attack when she lays eyes on it." She chuckled. "Anyway, tell us a bit about yourself. I'm sure you've got loads of interesting stories, having been all over Equestria 'n' all."

Greyhoof nodded. "Indeed. As I've said before, I have traveled for the majority of my life. I was raised in a library in a small town near Galloping Gorge."

Pinkie laughed. "Never heard of it."

"Pinkie!" reprimanded Twilight.

Greyhoof narrowed his eyes at Pinkie before he continued. "As I was saying, I was brought up by an old librarian couple. They weren't my parents, however; I've never met them... but that didn't matter to me. I was like the son they'd never had. It was at a very early age that I discovered my love of magic and knowledge, but at the same time, I felt empty inside." He let out a whimsical sigh. "Simply *reading* the books wasn't enough for me. I had to *experience* them. So, I left when I was still just a little colt."

Ignoring the rest of the party, which had escalated into a raucous game of pin-the-tail-on-the-pony, Greyhoof looked at his cloak with affection. "As for this thing, it's kept me warm on many a cold night spent on the road. It was given to me as a token of appreciation by the residents of a small town by Neighagra Falls. They were mercilessly under attack from a band of raiding griffons." Greyhoof paused for dramatic effect, or perhaps to remember how the rest of the tale went. "I managed to ward them off, sparing the village from their cruel talons. I was given this cloak as a token of their appreciation. As such, I have promised never to remove it."

"Uh huh," said Rainbow. "I'm *sure* you single-hoofedly took down a bunch of griffons."

"Rainbow!"

"Don't worry, Twilight, I believe him," said Rainbow sarcastically. "I think I'll join on the next round of the game." With that, she took off, flying over the other ponies' heads.

"Sorry about that, Greyhoof," said Twilight. "She can be like that sometimes. Don't worry; she's a nice pony once you get to know her."

"I'm sure," said Greyhoof dryly.

Pinkie's party continued deep into the night until the myriad of exhausted guests began trickling out in small groups. Greyhoof and Twilight spent the entirety of the party talking amongst themselves about magic, completely ignoring the festivities going on around them. Once the noise began to finally die down, Greyhoof breathed a sigh of relief and briskly trotted toward the bakery's door.

Twilight began looking around the room for Spike, finding the baby dragon fast asleep face-down in a half-eaten pie. "Hang on. At least someone had a good time," she giggled, picking up the snoring dragon with her magic and gently resting him on her back.

Applejack walked to the doorway, but stopped and turned around when she reached it. "So I'll see y'all tomorrow?" she asked. "It's been a little lonely over at the farm, what with Big Mac and Apple Bloom gone."

“Sure thing.”

“Thanks, Twi,” said Applejack, heading out of sight.

“Bye, guys!” Pinkie waved at the two unicorns. “Thanks for coming. And welcome to Ponyville, Greyhoof!”

Putting on an unconvincing smile, Greyhoof nodded at her. He took a few long strides before turning to face Twilight. “I guess I’ll see you sometime tomorrow.”

Twilight smiled. “The sooner, the better. I’ve been hitting a wall recently.”

“Well, I can’t make any promises, but I’ll see what I can do to help,” said Greyhoof, smiling bashfully. Giving Twilight a quick nod, Greyhoof trotted off into the night.

Twilight looked after him for a moment before Spike’s gentle snoring reminded her of where she needed to be. Walking as briskly as she dared, Twilight felt the cool evening breeze playing gently through her mane as she walked toward the library. Upon reaching the tree that she called home, Twilight opened the door and gently put Spike to bed before going upstairs to retire for the evening.

She lay awake, unable to sleep, her mind filled with the possibilities that tomorrow might bring for her quest. Eventually, she rolled out of bed, snuck down the stairs, and lit a single candle.
Time for some late-night studies.

But where to begin? She had searched high and low through nearly every section of books she owned. *Where should I...*

She almost dropped her candle. *How could I have missed this until now?* Walking purposefully toward a section that she rarely perused, her eyes scanned the various tomes in the Old Ponytales category. *If it worked for Nightmare Moon, maybe it’ll work for the Princess.*

It wasn’t long before Twilight had found her first candidate, yanked it from its resting place, and cracked it open. Coughing as the resulting cloud of dust reached her muzzle, Twilight began tearing through the book *Ancient Equestria*. She lost much of her initial enthusiasm when she discovered that most of the yellowed, tattered pages depicted Equestria as it was before the rule of the royal sisters, but contained little actual information on the two alicorns.

The first few pages told of the wars between the tribes of ponies – how they had eventually settled their differences, only to be plunged into yet more wars as they faced the threats of the griffons, dragons, and eventually Discord himself. When she finally reached a promising chapter, Twilight almost cried out in anger at a most horrific sight: a great number of pages had been ripped from the book.

“How did this happen?” she said through clenched teeth. “The Princess herself gave me this as a gift out of her own personal collection. Who would do such a thing?”

Befuddled, Twilight began reading the next page, which – according to the header – was part of the middle of a chapter called *The Zebra Scourge*. Twilight's frustration was redoubled when she realized that the start of the chapter was missing as well, and the page even began mid-sentence. Sighing, Twilight started to read:

– swept across the land, the zebras were unable to resist his might. Being driven from their homes, they could do nothing but flee across Eternity's Crossing in their makeshift boats in hopes of reaching the lands now known as Zavros. The Scourge relentlessly pursued them, unable to be content until every last one of them lay dead at his hooves. As they desperately took to the seas, the Scourge allowed them to make just enough distance from Equestria's southern shore before springing his trap. With nowhere to run, the zebras were helpless before him. Many ships sunk to the briny depths that night by the iron hoof of the Scourge. When all seemed lost, from the heavens above, descended the Princesses of sun and moon. Together, they harnessed the almighty Elements of Harmony. The Scourge was eradicated from the land, never to rise again. With Equestria liberated once and for all, the twin alicorns brought peace and order to the kingdom, once and forever. Many of the surviving zebras settled in Zavros, living out the rest of their lives in tranquility. However, the –

Twilight almost cursed aloud when she saw yet more missing pages, bringing the riveting tale to a premature end. The possibility of the following page providing some precious insight into Princess Celestia's magic drove her mad. Twilight read on, blazing through the remaining pages of the book with renewed vigour, but found nothing of importance. It seemed that the tale of the Scourge was the last great upheaval that the Princess had faced, before the coming of Nightmare Moon.

Whimpering in defeat, Twilight dropped the book, not bothering to replace it on its shelf, blew out the candle, and climbed the stairs up to bed in the pitch darkness. When she finally clambered into bed, she didn't even replace the covers, which still lay in a heap on the floor. Fervently hoping that she wouldn't have a repeat of the previous night, she fell fast asleep as soon as her head hit the pillow.

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